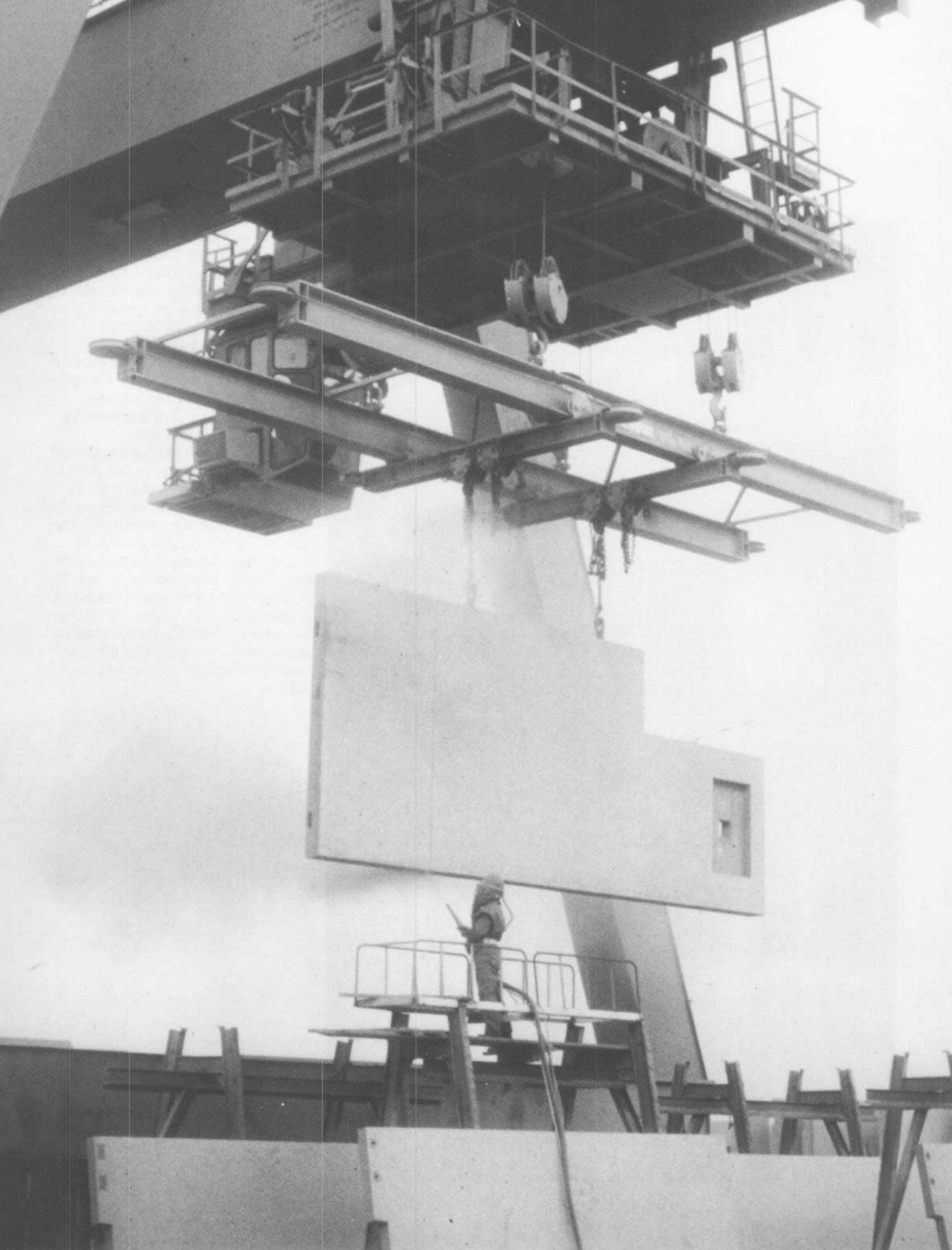
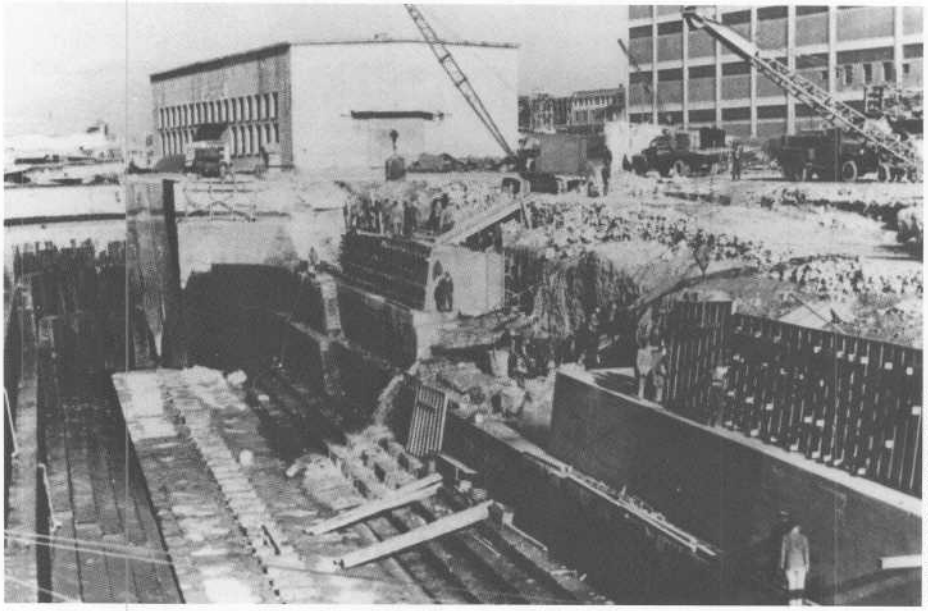


Work for Other Nations

Reconstruction at Piraeus Harbor, Greece, February 1948.



Office of History, Corps of Engineers

George C. Marshall.

U.S. Army

Shortly after World War II, the Corps of Engineers became involved in massive foreign assistance programs sponsored by the United States. These efforts responded to two closely connected results of the war. In the first place, much of Europe was a shambles, characterized in many instances by physical devastation and political instability. These conditions made the continent vulnerable to the apparently expansive goals of the Soviet Union. As a result, in 1947 Congress approved Secretary of State George C. Marshall's plan to provide financial support for reconstruction programs developed by participating European nations and separate aid packages for Greece and Turkey, which appeared particularly vulnerable to subversion or aggression.

The 1951 Mutual Security Act extended the foreign assistance program to other portions of the globe. This law was passed in a period of growing international tension, marked by the Berlin blockade, the Communist success in China and the Korean War. The purpose of the legislation was maintenance of the national security and promotion of U.S. foreign policy through military, economic and technical assistance to strengthen friendly nations. This remains the fundamental goal of the program. The act consolidated a variety of efforts, including the Military Assistance Program, authorized in 1949 by the Mutual Defense Assistance Act, through which the United States offered help to allies in establishing defenses against external aggression and internal violence. The Mutual Security Act also included the program of technical assistance first articulated as Point Four of President Truman's 1949 inaugural address. Finally, the new law replaced the various economic aid programs with comprehensive loan and grant provisions.

The current basic law, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, established the Agency for International Development (AID) within the State Department to administer the major economic aid programs. More significantly for later Corps of Engineers activities, section 607 provided for the furnishing of services and commodities to foreign

Precast plant, King Khalid Military City, Al Batin, Saudi Arabia.

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Dredging on the Suez Canal.

countries on a reimbursable basis. In the mid-1960s, this became the basis for major engineering programs.

Within the context of these laws, foreign assistance programs evolved to meet changing perceptions of the world situation and American interests. In the first period, from 1947 to 1952, economic aid predominated. During the Eisenhower years, from 1953 through 1960, most of the assistance from the United States was military. Then, in the decade that followed, an equilibrium was reached between economic assistance and military programs, including sales.

Other important trends shaped the role of the Corps in foreign programs. The emphasis on Europe during the early years after World War II, including Korean War bases in Middle Eastern and North African countries close to Europe, changed when the situation there stabilized. In the mid-1950s, the European share of American support dwindled to almost nothing, and the focus shifted to the Far East, South Asia and the Middle East. This trend coincided with another noteworthy tendency. During 1948-1952, most aid was in the form of grants. In fact, 90 percent of American help took the form of outright gifts. By the mid-1960s, 60 percent of economic aid was by loan.

The Corps of Engineers' contributions to these foreign programs took place in this context of evolving emphasis. Thus, during the immediate post-war years when American foreign policy and assistance programs emphasized Europe and particularly Greece and Turkey, the Corps was extremely active in these two nations. In Turkey, the Corps concentrated on construction of military facilities for Turkish and American armed forces. In Greece, after the State Department came to the Corps for technical expertise, the Corps restored a badly mauled transportation and communication network. The Grecian District, which was established in Athens in July 1947, cleared the Corinth Canal, restored the port of Piraeus, and built or repaired more than 3,000 kilometers of roads.

The Corps' operations in Greece established several major precedents. First was the organization of an engineer district to administer and supervise large-scale civil works in a foreign country. Second was the provision of technical assistance in conjunction with economic aid. Third, the practice of training indigenous contractors and artisans to perform as much of the actual work as possible began in Greece. And, fourth, the commitment to helping a friendly nation to help itself, which was manifested in projects aimed at restoring the Greek economy, became a standard feature of Corps projects.

During the 1950s, the Military Assistance Program dominated American overseas efforts. This program was one of two major Department of Defense foreign activities in which the Corps participated. First and most important was the maintenance and support of American forces in other lands. The other, the Military Assistance Program through which the United States aided the military forces of other nations, was directed largely toward supporting allies on the periphery of the Soviet Union and near the People's Republic of China.

In the period 1950-1964, this program dispensed assistance valued at more than $350 million. Iran, which was the largest single recipient, and four other nations—Pakistan, Turkey, Taiwan and Korea—received nearly all of the military assistance money. The projects carried out in Pakistan by the Trans-East District of the Mediterranean Division illustrate the nature of the work performed. In a massive modernization program for the Pakistani armed forces, the Corps built cantonments, airfields, wharves and marine railways.

While heavily involved in these efforts, the Corps also worked in programs of economic assistance. Projects intended to buttress a recipient nation's economy were administered by the AID and predecessor agencies. Corps participation in economic development programs actually predated the establishment of any of these agencies. As early as 1946, the Corps of Engineers worked with numerous Latin American governments to establish national cartographic programs. These efforts were ultimately intended to provide the basis for resource inventories of participating nations. After 1953, when the Department of State took over this program, the Corps continued to contribute to its success. Engineer personnel worked in 22 countries, developing programs, rendering procurement assistance, and administering contracts.

In the late 1950s the Corps began to undertake large projects within the economic assistance program. Between 1950 and 1964 the Corps produced major engineering studies for 17 different countries. These surveys dealt with beach erosion problems, river hydraulics, transportation networks and entire public works programs. Engineer personnel also examined the feasibility of various port and highway projects. The engineers also became involved in actual construction in eight countries. The major projects included airports, highway systems and ports. In the six years from 1959 through 1964, these efforts resulted in expenditures of $109.5 million.

The Corps' work on these studies and construction projects reflected new directions in the overall program administered by the AID.

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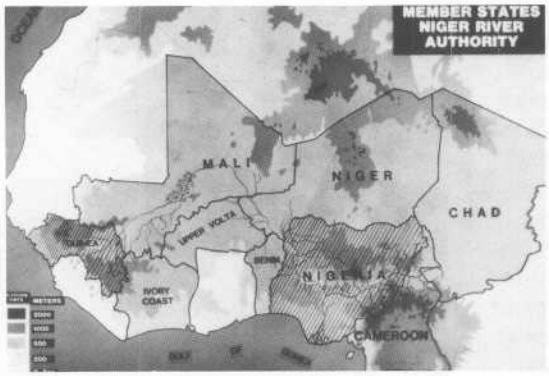
Enlisted quarters, King Khalid Military City.

In the years just prior to 1965, the focus was on long-term projects that supported broad economic development. In this framework engineering and construction loomed large and the Corps, with its unique capability to plan, organize and execute major building programs, made major contributions.

During the mid-1960s several developments led to changes in the Corps' role in foreign programs. AID changed its emphasis from major construction efforts aimed at improving economic infrastructures to more immediate needs for improvement of food supplies, public health and education. Moreover, the agency turned more to private engineering and architectural firms for support in this area. In so doing the agency cited for justification the provisions of section 601 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which encouraged maximum utilization of private resources instead of other government agencies.

The buildup of American armed forces in Vietnam also redirected the Corps' foreign operations. The maintenance and support of American forces in Southeast Asia took an ever-increasing portion of the Corps' resources. Moreover, Vietnam absorbed a growing percentage of the foreign aid budget, leaving less money for major projects in



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1980 saw Corps support for navigation and planning in the Niger basin.

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Port of Owendo, Gabon, West Central Africa, site of Corps studies for AID.

Israeli airbase under construction.

Public Affairs Office, Corps of Engineers

other parts of the world. As AID turned its attention to Vietnam and Southeast Asia, it became involved in major geodetic and cartographic enterprises. The Corps of Engineers, with expertise already employed in a number of other nations, contributed again to resource inventory projects and the production of maps required for the land reform program of the government of South Vietnam. Thus, while the Corps' involvement in major construction projects dropped off, it still participated in other aspects of AID's work.

Even before these developments changed the character of Corps overseas projects, another major factor entered the picture. This was the beginning of Corps involvement in reimbursable programs funded by recipient nations instead of by United States loans and grants. Authorized by section 607 of the Foreign Assistance Act, these projects were based on bilateral agreement between the United States and nations that sought Corps technical expertise in development programs. The first of these was funded by the government of Saudi Arabia in 1963. There the Corps engaged in a large number of construction projects, including a variety of facilities for the Saudi Arabian armed forces and civil projects such as construction of radio and television communications installations.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the number of reimbursable programs grew. In addition to the ongoing work in Saudi Arabia, where over $5 billion in construction has been completed, projects started in several other countries, among them Iran, Jordan, Kuwait and Libya. The Corps' effort in these nations improved the American balance of payments and provided valuable experience for engineer personnel while sharing the Corps' technical and professional expertise.

While managing reimbursable long-term projects, the Corps met more pressing requirements in the Middle East. In accordance with the Camp David agreement, the Corps built two airbases for Israel as replacements for those evacuated during the withdrawal from the Sinai. Finished in 1982, only three years after the start of construction, the bases cost about $1 billion, over three-fourths of which was an American grant. Meanwhile, the Corps also constructed Sinai base camps for the Multinational Force and Observers who patrol the demilitarized zone between Egypt and Israel.

Although the reimbursable programs of recent years have been less extensive than the massive Saudi Arabian and Israeli air base ones, they continue to be an important Corps mission as the agency explores the role it can play in "nation building" around the world. The wide variety of studies and projects to assist other nations included technical assistance to the African nation of Gabon in improving its ports, geological and hydrological studies of the Niger River basin in Africa, technical advice on water resources development to the People's Republic of China, disaster relief in Bangladesh after devastating floods in 1991, and construction of hydropower facilities in the Federated States of Micronesia. Whatever the scope of the project, the Corps seeks, as it has since the end of World War II, to assist other nations in improving their infrastructures, to share American technical know-how, and to help other countries develop their own capabilities for nation building. From massive construction programs like the one in Saudi Arabia to feasibility studies like the one for the port of Asau in Western Samoa, the Corps has developed the ability to assist other nations in a wide variety of engineering and construction management activities.

Dhahran Airport, Saudi Arabia.

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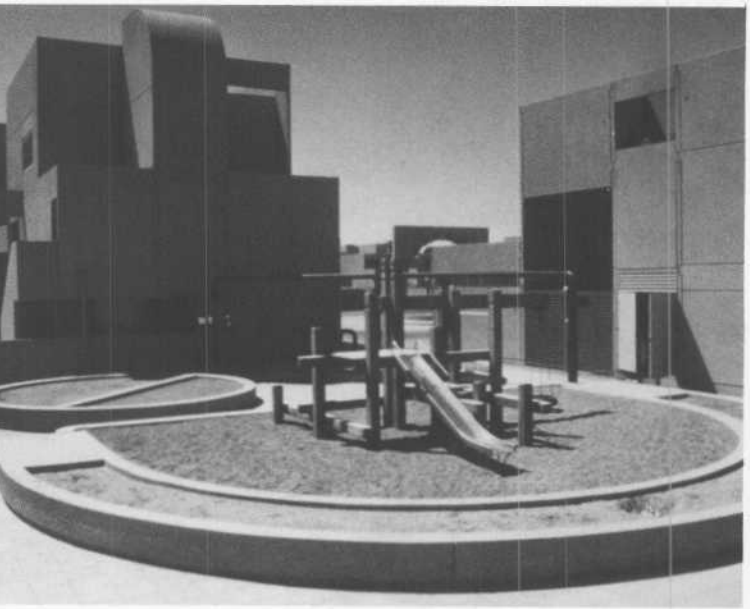

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Housing courtyard, King Abdul Aziz Military Academy.

Strengthening the Free World: Rehabilitation in Greece 1947-49

The advantages of having a military-civilian engineer organization in being were demonstrated when the United States decided to help Greece recover from the devastation of war.

Soon after the end of World War II, Greece was torn by a civil war between Communist guerrillas and government troops. President Truman and Congress believed it was in the national interest to prevent a Communist takeover. To strengthen the anti-Communist forces, a program of economic aid to Greece was developed under the auspices of the State Department. A Greece on the road to economic recovery would be less likely to fall to Communism.

President Harry S. Truman appointed Dwight P. Griswold, a former governor of Nebraska, as the administrator of the recovery program. Soon after his arrival in Greece in July 1947, Griswold reported on the extensive devastation he found. The State Department decided that the reconstruction and rehabilitation of roads, railroads, bridges, ports and the Corinth Canal, one of the main Greek waterways, were of primary importance. Once the country's transportation system was restored and the ports were in operable condition, economic recovery would be more rapid.

The State Department received some 100 letters from construction firms interested in doing the work. The department was, however, unfamiliar with doing construction and letting contracts and had no organization to do the job. It sent representatives a number of times to the Office of the Chief of Engineers to get information regarding such matters as the selection of contractors, the types of contracts that could be used and the amount of the fee to be paid. The State Department concluded it would be unable to do the work because it did not have the know-how in dealing with contractors and had no organization to put into Greece. It asked the engineers, who had a far-flung civil works construction organization, to do the work. The Secretary of State requested the Secretary of War to assume responsibility for the job. Assigned to the Corps of Engineers in late July 1947, it was scheduled to be completed within a year.

The engineers set up the Grecian District with headquarters in Athens, with personnel to be largely drawn from divisions and districts, and entered into agreements with a number of contractors who formed joint ventures. In mid-August, Colonel David W. Griffiths, the new district engineer, some of his civilian employees and some of the contractors' employees arrived in Athens. Actual reconstruction began in mid-September with the clearing away of debris from the harbor of Piraeus, the port of Athens. Soon work was under way on the reconstruction of other ports, the reconstruction of wrecked railroad bridges and tunnels and on the upgrading of highways, which had deteriorated badly. The Corinth Canal was cleared of debris. Soon after arriving in Greece, Colonel Griffiths was given the additional duty of upgrading a number of airfields. All of this work had to be done rapidly and efficiently. As the Secretary of War wrote, "The War Department is on continual exhibition to the President, the Congress, the State Department and to Greece . . . and other interested nations." Colonel George W. Marvin, the chief engineer of the U.S. Army Group advising the Greek Army in its fight against the guerrillas, helped Colonel Griffiths by obtaining Greek Army units to provide security for men working on District projects.

The Corps reconstructed about 900 miles of highway, rebuilt three major ports, restored railroad bridges and tunnels totalling some two miles, and upgraded 10 airfields. The Corinth Canal was reopened after about 1 million cubic yards of earth and debris had been removed. Actual construction time was about a year and a half; the overrun resulted mainly from guerrilla attacks, unusually severe winter weather, and delays in getting supplies. Once again, the engineer military-civil organization made possible the efficient accomplishment of a mission.